

NAME: Oshiro Kokan DATE OF BIRTH: 1902 PLACE OF BIRTH: Okinawa
 Age: 73 Sex: M Marital Status: M Education: 8 yrs.

PRE-WAR:

Date of arrival in U.S.: 1918 Age: 16 M.S. S Port of entry: San Fran.
 Occupation/s: 1. Farmer 2. 3.
 Place of residence: 1. Brawley 2. 3.
 Religious affiliation: Christian church
 Community organizations/activities:

EVACUATION:

Name of assembly center: Fresco Center
 Name of relocation center: Jerome, Arkansas
 Dispensation of property: Returned land Names of bank/s:
 Jobs held in camp: 1. kitchen clean up 2. carpenter
 Jobs held outside of camp:
 Left camp to go to: Florin

POST-WAR:

Date returned to West Coast: Sept. 1945
 Address/es: 1. Florin 2. Sacramento
 3.
 Religious affiliation: Christian church
 Activities: 1. 2. 3.
 If deceased, date, place and age at time of death:

Name of interviewer: Takarabe Date: 1/9/76 Place: Sacramento
Mandator Nahel Hall

Q: What is your name?

A: My name is Kokan Oshiro.

Q: How much schooling did you have?

A: I had 8th grade education.

Q: Where is your birthplace?

A: It is Okinawa.

Q: When were you born?

A: I was born in 1902. I will be 74 in May.

Q: What was your father's profession?

A: He was an elementary teacher for about 3 to 4 years. Then he worked at the village office as an officer. In those days there was the land adjustment, and my father was in charge of measuring each land in our village for the tax purpose. In olden days only farmers could own land. The land was allotted according to the size of the family. Every 10 years there was a readjustment of allocation. The land included good land, bad land, forrest and everything. Villages that had small population had small allocation and villages with large population had big land allocated. It was still the same way after the Meiji Restoration. My father was in charge of measuring each lot in our village for the tax purpose.

Q: Why did they have readjustment every 10 years?

A: It was like today's Communist policy. The government policy was like that in those days. That may be because the poor villages

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should not stay poor all the time. Large families were allocated big land. Some families with many small children and a few adults could not cultivate the land and they had to pay tax according to the size of the land, so they returned some of the land. On the other hand, families with many adult workers received more land.

Q: Whose policy was that?

A: It was the policy of Okinawa government.

Q: Was there a feudal lord in Okinawa in those days?

A: Okinawa was ruled by a king. In olden days there was a rivalry of powerful leaders in Okinawa. Gradually they were unified into 3 tribes, Northern, Central and Southern. In those days they were trading with China, Malaya and Thailand, but mostly with China. The leader of each tribe was called Ohnushi (Big lord). At that time a messenger came from China saying that China will make the Southern lord a king. I think that was China's diplomacy.

Q: Was Okinawa unified since then?

A: The son of Tametomo Minamoto married the Southern lord's daughter. Since Tametomo's son became the king of Central Tribe and won the wars, the Central Tribe became strong and conquered the Southern Tribe and unified the three tribes.

After that the 'Sho' family has been ruling Okinawa, and the present family is the third one. When a king became extravagant he was defeated in election. There was election in Okinawa since the olden days. The ancestor of the present 'Sho' family was a farmer who came from an island in North and became King Shoen.

Q: Does that family still continue to exist?

A: Yes, it does. The descendant of King Shoen is still living. An American historian says that Okinawa was the model for Japan. Tokugawa government followed the example of Okinawa. Japan learned a lot from Okinawa. Okinawa was a territory of Satsuma clan in olden days.

Q: Did Satsuma clan actually conquer Okinawa?

A: No, they couldn't because it was too far away. If Satsuma tried to conquer Okinawa they had to go there by ship. Then they would have been defeated at the port. Gradually they conquered southern part of Ryukyu. Then they attacked from the north and finally they conquered Ryukyu.

Q: When was that?

A: It was Hideyoshi Toyotomi's time.

After Satsuma started governing Ryukyu, officers of Satsuma Clan started coming in to Okinawa. Under Tokugawa government Satsuma clan could not trade with foreign countries, but through Okinawa they traded with China and crossing the South Seas they went as far as Europe. They took all the good merchandise back to Satsuma and sold them so they made much money.

When Hideyoshi Toyotomi conquered Korea, he ordered Okinawa to send soldiers but Okinawa refused, so with that as an excuse Hideyoshi conquered Okinawa. Since then Okinawans could not own weapons. When the British fleet came to Okinawa they said Okinawa is an unarmed peaceful island. I think missionaries were in Okinawa since early days.

I think Uragami in Nagasaki was named by a missionary. There is a place with the same name in Okinawa and on Miyako Island. A missionary named _____ lived in Okinawa for about 10 years. In those days all the religion except Shingon Sect. was prohibited so he could not evangelize, but Okinawa was influenced by Christianity.

Q: Was your father an officer of the village office?

A: yes, he worked for the village office. Then he came to America.

Q: How long did the reallocation of the land last?

It seems

A: Okinawa became one of Japan's prefectures around 1879, so I think it continued until then. As there was a regulation in Okinawa that land belonged only to farmers, descendants of 'samurai' could not buy or own land.

Q: Then there was not much difference between the rich and the poor, wasn't there?

A: There seemed to have been difference between the rich and the poor from olden days. The land allocation system was made later. The price of land was very high, but when the farmers made money they bought the land. Rich people in the country expanded their land that way.

Q: Could they buy land at your father's time?

A: They couldn't buy land any more then. There was land allocation until Okinawa became a prefecture in 1879. At Meiji Restoration time when clans were abolished and prefectures were established many samurai who were in the country renounced their clan and became civilians so that they could receive land. My father's

grandfather was one of them. He renounced the 'samurai' clan and became a farmer.

Q: Were those who worked at the village office descendants of 'samurai'?

A: No, they were farmers. The village master represented the lords of the land.

Q: Did the village master get paid from the village office?

A: The village office paid his salary.

Q: Did he own land?

A: Yes, he did as he was a farmer. In Okinawa a person who was elected as the lord of the land 3 times received the treatment of a minister. He could not become a 'samurai' but he had a higher position than a regular 'samurai'.

Q: Were there 'samurai' also?

A: Yes, there were many 'samurai'. There were 'samurais' who had jobs and those who did not have jobs but were fed and received salary.

Q: Did they served their feudal lords?

A: Yes, they did.

Q: The system was much different from that in Kagoshima, wasn't it?

A: The farming system was much different from that in Kagoshima.

Q: Didn't the people in Okinawa received better treatment?

A: It might have been good, but after Okinawa was occupied by Kagoshima people in Okinawa had to pay tax to Kagoshima as well as Okinawa.

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Even after the Meiji Restoration the system was not reformed for a long time, so the people had to pay much tax. Everytime people ran for the Diet they promised to reduce tax but they could not it for a long time. It seems that it is better after the war. Sugar was produced in Okinawa, yet people in Okinawa had to pay the consumption tax. Until recent years Okinawa suffered from heavy taxation.

Q: What kind of a person was your father?

A: I was separated from my father when I was 3 years old, and when I arrived in San Francisco in August, he had passed away in June of that year so I don't know him.

Q: Where did your father come to?

A: He went to Hawaii first and then came here. He went to Hawaii in 1904 and came to America in 1905.

Q: Then you don't know about your father, don't you?

A: I just heard about him from his friends.

Q: What was your father doing?

A: He was farming in Imperial Valley. He was the first one from Okinawa to go to Imperial Valley. For about 2 to 3 years he did not make money but later with 3 other people, his oldest brother, Mr. Nakamura and Mr. Ohta as partners leased 40 acres and farmed.

Around 1910 they made profit and each man saved about \$3,000, so my uncle said, "Let's go back to Japan." My father said he would not go back to Japan until he saved more than \$10,000, so his brother went back to Japan alone. Mr. Ohta worked in a produce market for a while but later opened Star Market in Los Angeles with Mr. Hirashiki as his partner. He is one of the most successful man from my prefecture. He managed the store until he was evacuated. Mr. Nakamura was a son of the wealthiest farmer in Okinawa. He came to America to avoid the draft. As he was from a rich family he didn't know the value of money, so he spent all the money in Los Angeles.

Q: What had become of him?

A: He was farming in Fresno but he became crazy from drinking too much and finally went back to Japan and died there.

Q: What did your father do?

A: He went to Los Angeles and started a hog-raising business as it seemed promising, but they could not get garbage from the city. Then the City of Los Angeles made a regulation that they could not raise hogs within a certain distance from the city. The hog raisers got together and took it to the court but they lost. As there was no space big enough to raise hogs he moved the hogs to Imperial Valley by trailers. He leased land, fenced it and put hogs there but as Imperial Valley is hot the hogs died one by one, and he lost all the money. Since then he had been poor. The year he died he made profit, but as he died before I came here the money was frozen by the government, so after I came here I had to go to court many times to claim it.

Q: What about your mother?

A: She came to America with me.

Q: How many brothers and sister do you have?

A: Just two of us.

Q: You were brought ^{here} _^ by your mother, weren't you?

A: Yes. She died during the war.

Q: What about your grandparents?

A: I had grandparents on father's side and mother's side. They died after we came to America in their 80s.

Q: Was you mother a strong person or a gentle person?

A: She was healthy and was known as a strong woman in the village. Her father was a landlord but I heard my mother and her sister among 5 children were always put to work.

Q: What was the reason you came to America?

A: I came here as a 'yobiyose'. Father summond his wife and children because he was going to settle down here.

Q: How old were you then?

A: I was not quite 17 years old then. I became 17 after I came here.

Q: When you were in Japan, what kind of country did you think America was?

A: My uncle told me about America, especially about Imperial Valley.

Q: What kind of thing did he tell you?

A: He brought back photographs taken in those days. He showed me pictures of men as dark as the Blacks wearing Mexican hats and working in the field. When I asked, "Do you work like that in America?", he answered, "How can you make money if you don't work hard? It is a mistake to think that you lead easy lives in America." My uncle was a talkative, strouthearted and sturdy built man. He brought knives for cutting grapes and showed me how to pick grapes. Every year at grape season he went to Fresno to pick grapes. On the way home he stopped at Ishimitsu Company in Los Angeles and spent all the money he earned buying Japanese food to be sent to Brawley. One year he earned only \$20 to spend at Ishimitsu Company.

T: Many Issei came to America thinking they will make a fortune.

O: I came here thinking I will make a fortune, but I didn't think I could make money without working hard as I heard the story from my uncle. My uncle told me that there are no houses in Imperial Valley, so we live in tents in the desert where there is nothing around. He said we do not stay in one place but move to another place in about 3 years. When I asked what they do about water there he said that water comes from the Colorado River so they do not lack water.

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Q: Where did you get on board the ship when you came here?

A: I got on board the ship from Kobe. I took a ship from Naha to Kobe. I could not get a passport until I came to Kobe. I transferred ship at Kagoshima and went to Kobe. It took $1\frac{1}{2}$ days from Okinawa to Kagoshima, then 4 days from Kogashima to Kobe stopping here and there.

Q: Was the passport issued right away?

A: We get application forms for passport at the village office. After the police signs the paper we take it to the Prefectural office. Then when we go to Kobe we get the passport issued. There was a bad policeman in the Police Department who would not sign the paper unless we bribed him.

Q: Was he a police officer?

A: There was a policeman in our village who would not put his seal on the application so it took a long time. I think that delayed my arrival in America. ^{Consequently} I could not get in time for my father's death. After we gave him presents he put his seal on the application. In 1926 I saw that policeman in our district, but I did not feel like talking to him.

Q: Did many people come ^{to America} from Okinawa?

A: Compared to other prefectures not too many people came to America from Okinawa, but many people went to Hawaii. and ^USouth America. About 80% of Japanese in ^{Argentina} are from Okinawa, and about 60% of Japanese in Brazil are from Okinawa. I think there are about 600,000 Japanese in Brazil. Especially after the war many Japanese went there from Okinawa. I think 40% of Japanese in Peru are from Okinawa, so I can say that most Japanese in South America are from Okinawa.

Q: What kind of passengers were on board the ship?

A: There were many picture brides. and young yobiyose men. In Kobe all the hotels were full ^{and} _Λ more than 20 people slept in one room.

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The ships were so crowded that people had to draw lots to decide who get the passage. Those who drew blanks could not come.

Q: Did you come here in 1919?

A: I came here in 1918. I think I left Kobe on July 17.

Q: Did you get your passport right away in Kobe?

A: Yes, I did. Those who won the passage had the eye examination and roundworm test, and when you passed the tests you could go.

Q: Did you win the passage?

A: Yes, but I still had to wait a month for the result of the drawing.

Q: Did you stay in a hotel during that time?

A: Yes, I did.

T: The hotel people must have made profit.

H: In those days the hotel charges were very cheap.

Q: Do you remember anything that happened on board the ship?

A: We repeated the same thing day after day, and there wasn't anything special.

Q: Did you talk to the picture brides?

A: Yes, I did once, but I don't remember what we talked about.

They were ^{ages} from around 18 to 23 years. I was young compared with them.

Q: Did you stop off at Hawaii?

A: Yes, we did. I think we stayed there for about 3 days. As my mother became seasick on board the ship I bought pineapples when we arrived in Hawaii and gave them to her. Since then she became well.

Q: Didn't you get seasick?

A: I didn't feel well for a while after the ship left Kobe, but after a while I became well and I had better appetite than ever. My younger brother became seasick. Men and women had different compartments. We used to go and see mother, but we were chased out by porters.

Q: Where did you go from Hawaii?

A: We came straight to San Francisco. As we stopped over at Hawaii for 3 days, it took altogether 17 days from Kobe to San Francisco. We were taken to the Immigration Office on Angel Island where we had a check-up. People came to the Angel Island to meet ^{the} passengers.

Q: Your father had passed away, didn't he?

A: Yes, An interpreter at the Immigration asked me if it is true that my father passed away, so I said I had not heard such thing.

Q: Weren't you surprised to hear such thing?

A: I thought it was strange as I thought father was still well. A man from the same village came to meet us. I wondered if he was my father although he looked different from the photograph. He took care of us. As there was mother and two children my father's friends got together and asked us if we would like to farm together, so we farmed with him in Imperial Valley for about 3 years.

It was right after the World War I and the business was good, so we could make money no matter what we grew.

Q: What did you grow?

A: We grew green peas, corn and cantaloupe. After we moved to a 50 acre ranch we grew tomatoe, cantaloupe and peas.

Q: Did you work with him as partners?

A: My brother was still in school, so I worked with him as partners. Soon after I came here I learned to plough using horses.

Q: Did you think you couldn't do it as your father was not there?

A: I had the partner so I didn't feel helpless.

Q: Was your partner your relation?

A: No, he was from the same village. Our families knew each other.

When he became 37 years old he did not have to worry about being drafted, so he went back to Japan to take a wife and come back here. But when he went home his father would not let him come back to America. As he did not take too much money I sent him \$300 for the passage but he did not come back. Since I lost my partner I became a farm laborer and went from one place to another carrying a blanket on my back.

Q: Did you do that in Imperial Valley?

A: Imperial Valley and Fresno area.

Q: Wasn't Imperial Valley a hot place?

A: Yes, it was. My uncle used to say, "I wonder if you can stand the heat when you go there." It was a very hot place. We can stand the heat up to 120 degrees but we cannot stand it when it gets over that. That was by the standard thermometer at the Water Company in Brawley. The Water Company was surrounded by lakes and there were many gum trees around it, so it was cooler there. When we filled a washtub with water and left it in the sun it became so hot that we could not put our hands in it. If we filled the bathtub with water in the daytime it became hot, but if you get in it without heating the water it made your body itch. We had to heat it and add water in it before we could get in. In town people heated water by putting pipes on the roof, and used it as hot water, but they could not use the water for bath unless they heat it once. If we used cold water for bath we would get heat rash.

Q: About what time did you start working in the morning?

A: At ordinary time we worked from 7 in the morning till 7 in the evening, but at cantaloupe harvest season we started working around 4.

Q: What about lunch break?

A: We had about an hour for lunch break. At melon harvest season we worked till after midnight and left for work at 4 so we did not have much time to sleep. We had to get up before 4 to eat breakfast.

Q: Won't that kind of life affect your health?

A: No, because it is only for about a month. The rest of the time we take care of melon by hoeing and watering them.

Q: Did your father die in Imperial Valley?

A: He died in a hospital in San Francisco.

Q: Did he get ill in Imperial Valley?

A: Yes, he did.

Q: Was it because of the heat?

A: Spanish Flu was rampant in those days and even young people died one after another. I think he died of Flu. My father had asthma, so my uncle used to say that father could not live in cold climate.

Q: Could you work in such heat in Imperial Valley?

A: We had to work at melon time or melon would spoil. We had to carry melon which weighed about 70 pounds a bagfull.

T: I am surprised the people don't die from heat
often

H: People ^{often} collapsed from sunstroke. I heard that in olden days students from San Francisco went to Imperial Valley to pick cantaloupe and died of sunstroke. It was like the bottom of hell. Now there is a big highway from Los Angeles so we don't get that feeling, but in those days a narrow road took us down ^{into} the valley from Indio, so we felt as if we were going to the bottom of hell.

Q: What kind of recollections do you have about the first 3 years?
What kind of hardships did you experience?

A: As I was young then I did not know what hardship was. I just worked hard.

Q: Did you live in a tent?

A: When I came here the houses were made of wood. ^{The room} Where workers slept was about 10 feet by 12 feet, and where I slept was about 10 feet by 8 feet. When the lease was over, we put the house on a wagon, and moved it. The house was a one-bedroom small house surrounded by screen. The walls were made of thin cedar board and the roof was made of thin board. When the house became old we could see the moon lying on the bed through the cracks in the roof.

Q: When we think about it now, it was a terrible place, wasn't it?

A: Yes, it was. In those days there were no coolers, ^{so} when it was hot children could not even cry. After the harvest season was over, whether we made profit or not we let wives and children go to Los Angeles area for vacation from July to September. The husbands stayed behind and prepared for planting in the fall. After people became wiser they found a cool place on top of a hill on way to San Diego. An old couple owned about 10 acres and were living there. Someone rented some land and put up a tent and spent one summer there. There was plenty of water which came from the fountain on top of the hill so children could play with water hose. People from Imperial Valley found that place one after another, and finally everybody from Imperial Valley started going there. We even had Sunday School there. Children had summer school there, and went back to Imperial Valley when the school started.

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Q: How was the winter in Imperial Valley?

A: It was very cold. There was a pond for horses to drink water from. During the night water ^rfoze and there was about 2 inches of ice on the pond. We had to break the ice with an axe so that horses could drink water. It was that cold at night time, but it was warm in the daytime. When the wind blew it was cold even in the daytime.

Q: Why did Japanese go to such a place?

A: Because they could pick cantaloupe early there. Most cantaloupe were produced there.

Q: Were there many Japanese?

A: Yes, there were. Japanese Association was active there. When a man was elected as the president of the Japanese Association he thought as if he became a minister. There was an old man from Shizuoka named Mr. Endo. He did not have any education but he had a big farm and made a fortune. He became the head grower of Girard Company and his name was on the crates. As he shipped so much produce to New York, the railroad company gave him a free trip to New York. As he became rich he wanted to become a president of the Imperial Valley Japanese Association. He paid membership fee to Japanese Association for all his workers and was elected the president. There was such a period. Japanese Association was very active then, and to become its secretary was the highest honor for educated Japanese.

Q: When you came over here were there many single Issei men?

A: Yes, there were. After that time they could go back to Japan to get married, so many men did that.

Q: Were there any gambling houses in Imperial Valley?

A: There was Tokyo Club in Brawley in those days. There was a big casino in Mexicali but not too many Americans went there as it was too hot. Chinese gambling houses were prosperous.

Q: Were there many Chinese gambling houses?

A: Chinese gambling houses were prosperous in Mexicali. There the back part of small stores were gambling places and brothels.

Q: Did many people lose money at gambling houses and brothels?

A: Yes. Many people went there from Imperial Valley. In winter many white people went there, but as the business was not too good they made casinos in Encinada. After that casinos were built in Las Vegas.

Q: Did many single ^{Japanese} lose money?

A: They lost money in Chinese gambling. Tokyo Club was operated by Japanese but was like Chinese gambling. There were such places in Sacramento, Stockton, Fresno and Los Angeles. Around the time I came here the boss of the club was a big shot, and I hear there were fights between the clubs.

Q: Did you know anybody who lost his fortune?

A: I didn't know anybody who had much money. Only some people lost what he made.

Q: When you came here Isseis were in their 40s and 50s weren't they?

A: Yes, they were.

Q: Did many of them give in to drinking and gambling?

A: Yes, they did.

Q: Did you think older Isseis were loose?

A: It all depends on that person. There were many serious people, but on the other hand there were many who led loose lives. Many Isseis were absorbed in gambling. Many Isseis who could not marry and who could not manage a business well went from one camp to another carrying blankets on their shoulders. I experienced going from one camp to another, but when I went to camps in Fresno most Isseis talked mostly about gambling.

Q: About how many years did you spend as a ^{transcient} farm laborer?

A: I think I did it for about 6 years.

Q: Where did you do that?

A: Mostly ⁱⁿ Imperial Valley and worked at friend's house.

Q: Did you go to Fresno and San Diego during the 6 years?

A: I did not go to San Diego or Arizona. After the harvest in Imperial Valley I used to go to Turlock.

Q: Where was your mother then?

A: As she was lonely she went back to Japan after 9 months.

Q: How about your younger brother?

A: He went to San Francisco and worked as a schoolboy. He stayed there until evacuation.

Q: How many years younger is he?

A: He is 3 years younger.

Q: He was young then, wasn't he?

A: He was only 13 or 14 years old when I came here.

Q: You didn't have any responsibility, didn't you?

A: No, I only sent some money to mother.

Q: What kind of recollections do you have about your transient days?

A: I didn't feel like a hardship as I was young. It was kind of fun. There were many young men around my age who were doing the same then. They are all settled down and many of them are living around Los Angeles.

Q: Where did you sleep when you were a transient?

A: In most places in the country there were camps and in town there were boarding houses. I stayed in a boarding house and went to work from there. It was like that in Fresno.

Q: Did you work at different places every day?

A: Not everyday. We stayed at one camp for one season, but if that camp was not good we went to another camp.

Q: It was quite^{an} easygoing life' wasn't it?

A: Yes, it was. If those who gambled lost all the money they earned they did not have money to pay the boarding house, but as I did not gamble I did not have to worry about the boarding money nor spending money. As I always had enough spending money I went to another camp if I did not like that camp. One year I went around many camps. It was quite fun as I get to know different places. I went as far as Visalia.

Q: Was it hot around Fresno?

A: Yes, it was. At grape season it was very hot.

Q: How was it compared to Imperial Valley?

A: It was not as hot as Imperial Valley. We used to go to Fresno when it was the hottest. It is the hottest in Imperial Valley in August used to but we[^] leave there in first part of July to go to Fresno.

Q: When did you get married?

A: In 1934.

Q: How old were you then?

A: I was 32 years old then.

Q: What did you do after the transient period?

A: I started growing strawberry in Florin.

Q: Why did you start growing strawberry in Florin?

A: My friend Mr. Dakusaku lived in Turlock. He went to Fresno for a year and then was planning to go to Los Angeles with me. When we were getting ready to go to Los Angeles he received an invitation from Mr. Nakamura of Florin to go there and grow strawberry with him. When we came here there was space in Mr. Jenkin's ranch where we could grow strawberry without paying rent if we grew grape between strawberry. Mr. Daksaku stayed there and I went back to Imperial Valley. After melon time in Imperial Valley I went to Turlock to harvest melon there. Then I went to Florin to visit Mr. Dakusaku. The day I arrived in Florin was the wedding day of Mr. Nakazato's daughter and I was invited. I stayed at Mr. Dakusaku's house and helped him. Also the go-between of the marriage wanted me to pick grape so I helped him. I worked around here for a while. In 1926 I went back to Japan, stayed there for half and year and came back in 1927.

Q: Did you want to go back to Japan?

A: I wanted to see my mother as I sent her back to Japan alone.

Q: Did you take your wife then?

A: No, I was only 24 years old then. The work in America was hard so I did not want to come back to America, but as I was running out of money and I was told that I may be drafted for military service, I came back in a hurry.

Q: Did you come back to Florin from Japan?

A: Yes, I did. When I came back in April of 1927 the strawberry was ready, so I started picking them. The work was hard after doing nothing for a while. We had an uncle named Gibo. As his family in Japan heard nothing from him for a long time, my mother asked me to look for him when I came to America. In the winter of 1927 Mr. Matsushima who was an officer of Salvation Army in Sacramento asked Mr. Dakusaku to hold a funeral for a man from Okinawa named Kinoshita. We did not know of anybody by that name from Okinawa so we went to see him and found out that he was the man who went to Mr. Dakusaku's and asked for some money to buy bread as he was penniless after failing in business in Colorado and fled to California. I think he died from pneumonia. He was a gambler. Since Mr. Matsushima asked us to hold a funeral, people from Okinawa met at Mr. Miyagi's in Oak Park. At that time Mr. Miyagi's relative came and told us that there was a single man named Gibo in Vacaville and he would be the same way when he die. I thought he must be my uncle, so I went to Vacaville to see him. When I told him that I was Kozo Oshiro's son he did not believe me. Gibo was a gambler and he did not save money so he did not write to Japan. I brought Uncle Gibo to Florin, and leasing the land started growing strawberry with him. After working for about a month and a half Gibo wanted to gamble. He asked me to take him to town but I didn't. I had to fight with him everyday and he finally left.

Q: How old was he then?

A: I think he was around 60 years old. When my brother was going back to Japan I asked him to take the uncle back with him. I sent him back to Japan with the money he saved here, but he could not stay home. He had a son same age as my brother and 3 older daughters.

Q: How did his family make a living?

A: His family was well to do so they did not have trouble in making a living.

T: I guess he could not stay there as he did not bring up the children.

O: Since he gambled all his life he could not live steadily in Japan.

Q: What had become of him?

A: He was coming back to America and went as far as Tokyo with my brother but as he did not have a visa he was stuck at Yokohama for a while. He asked me to send him the passage, so I did and he came back. I ^othought he would have been cured, but he wasn't. He worked here and there and died of cancer. When I heard that he was ill in Lodi I brought him here. As he had a daughter in Hawaii I wrote to her and she took him to Hawaii. Four days after he went there he died. In Hawaii there were many Japanese from the same village, so I heard that they gave him a big funeral.

T: He put everybody to trouble, didn't he?

A: Gamblers were all like that. There were many people like him in olden days.

Q: Was his family rich?

A: It wasn't rich but had enough to live on.

Q: Were there gamblers' families that had difficulties making a living?

A: Yes, there were many such families.

Q: Did you settle down here and grew strawberry?

A: Yes. Before the war I bought land and was farming, but during the Depression I could not make payments. I stayed there until evacuation.

Q: What did you do during the Depression? Could you make a living?

A: At that time the Strawberry Company lend us money, but only a little at a time. We bought food from stores on credit. We bought a year's supply of food from Mr. Akiyama's store on credit. The company did not lend us much money but they lend us money to pay for the food.

Q: Were there many people around here who had difficulties making a living?

A: Yes, there were. I don't know how people brought up their children.

There were many small children but not many people who could work, Issei all had ^{hard} times in those days.

Q: Did you get married during the Depression?

A: Yes, we did. She was put to work as soon as she came here.

Q: How did you get married?

A: We are distant relations. My wife was born in Hawaii. As her father was in Hawaii she came to Hawaii. I went to Hawaii and brought her here.

Q: Who matched you?

A: Our parents did.

Q: How old were you (Mrs. O.) then?

A: I was not quite 18 years old. We had a wedding here, but we needed the signatures of parents, so we sent the certificate to Hawaii to have it signed. Then we were legally married.

Q: Did you know about America, then, Mr. Oshiro?

A: No, I didn't as I just came from Japan.

Q: Were you surprised?

A: I thought America was a better place. I came here at the poorest time. I had not experience hardship in Japan.

Q: You didn't have to give up your land, didn't you?

A: When we were in camp in Fresno the landlord came to the camp to make me sign the paper that I would return the land, so I did.

Q: Did you lease the land or buy the land?

A: I bought the land for \$1,200 but I paid only \$200 and was paying only the interest to \$1,000 balance.

Q: Could you buy the land?

A: I bought it in my wife's name. As soon as she came here she went picking strawberry at Mills. As the wages was cheap two of us made only about \$80. While we were commuting to Mills our car broke down.

Q: Did you have to work outside even though you own land?

A: We could not make a living with only the produce from our land.

Every year we went out to work. Even big children all went to work at Mills. The wages were 15¢ an hour then.

Q: Did the things get better after a while?

A: It did not get much better, except the wages went up.

Q: When were your children born?

A: The first one was born in 1936.

Q: Did you continue working there until the war broke out?

A: We worked at other people's house besides taking care of our own.

Sometimes we would start the pump for watering in the morning before we went to work. By the time we came home the field was watered, so I would stop the pump.

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Q: How much did you pay interest on \$1,000?

A: When we borrowed money from the company they charged 10% interest.

Q: Was that a Japanese company?

A: The strawberry companies were all owned by Japanese.

Q: How much interest did you pay for \$1,000 you owed on the land?

A: I don't remember well, but I think it was 4 or 5%. The company paid the electric bill because if we did not pay the electric bill we could not water the strawberry and they will be dried up.

Q: How did you feel when you heard about the Pearl Harbor attack?

e4 A: I didn't believe it at first. I was worried if the war might break out but I didn't think it would really happen. Since America started boycotting Japanese goods I was afraid the war might break out. I didn't know that the war broke out until the next day. We were going to show a movie at the Methodist Church so I went around selling tickets. When I went to Mr. Yoshino next door to go to church with him to arrange chairs for the movie Mr. Yoshino said, "Don't you know that the war broke out between America and Japan?" "Is that true?" I said as I could not believe it. "You are so easy-going. It is not time to arrange chairs" said Mr. Yoshino. We did not have a chance to refund the money for the tickets.

Q: What were you doing that Sunday?

A: I forgot what I did.

Q: Did you think you were in danger?

A: I was the auditor of the Heimusha Kai, so my name was on the black list with 5 other officers of the Society. The F.B.I. agent came and asked me many questions about the Heimusha Kai. The president Mr. Tsuji was a furniture salesman. In those days he went around selling oil stoves so he was not home whenever the F.B.I. agents came. The vice-president Mr. Mizugami worked at various places so he was not home either. The F.B.I. agents went to the secretary Mr. Miyoshi's house a couple of times. They also met Mr. Kamei who was in gasoline retail business. Mr. Tanaka and I were always home. They came to the field where I was working and asked many questions about Heimusha Kai. He even knew things we did not know. Finally he told me that I did not have to worry.

Q: Did you know that he was an F.B.I. agent?

A: I knew that F.B.I. would investigate me. I had met him at Mr. Nakamura's when his daughter committed suicide by jumping in a river, so I knew he was an agent and he knew me, too. He understood my broken English.

Q: Did you find out that you had to go to camp?

A: A little while after the war broke out the newspapers reported that we would be put in camps. My wife's two brothers were in the Japanese Army. The older brother was a doctor and the younger one was an officer. There was a picture of him in uniform wearing a saber. We burnt that picture and most other pictures of my wife's brothers in uniforms. We were told that we could not take this and that so we threw away all kinds of things. Before the war I had subscribed to 2 Japanese magazines, 'Kodan Club' and the 'King'. I had a pile of them so I burnt them as the fuel for the bath. We had a hard time burning them as they did not burn well. The F.B.I. agents did not come to Florin.

We had a hard time at the time of evacuation. When I went to register one morning I was told to leave the next morning. I had boxes ready to put strawberry in but I did not have time to do that so I asked my landlord to do that. He took me to Elk Grove, too. While it was light we took farm equipments outside and furnitures to the landlord's barn and stored them there. At night we had to clear the house. I didn't know where to begin, but my wife's cousin who came from Hawaii told me that we should clear one room at a time, so we did. As children were small we made them sleep on the mattress in the living room. We stayed up all night packing everything by the following morning.

Q: Was that your own house?

A: Yes, it was. A Filipino is living there now.

Q: Did you wonder what would become of you?

A: When we left we did not even dream of coming back to Florin.

I thought we might be able to get out after the war was over, but I didn't think we could come back to California. I think most Japanese felt the same way.

Q: Did you still work in the field everyday?

A: In winter time we do not work^{much}, but when it gets warmer I will.

Q: Were you worried when you heard about the Pearl Harbor attack?

A: Yes, I was. My wife's father had been living in Hawaii, but he went back to Japan by the last ship before the war broke out as his wife and children were in Japan. When the war between America and Japan broke out we were worried about the future, but we could not do anything about it.

Q: Did you think you were in danger?

A: As America stopped selling goods to Japan I thought America was going to fight with Japan, but I did not think it would start so soon. As 2 envoys, Kurusu and Nomura came from Japan I hoped they would negotiate for peace. We read in Japanese newspapers that America was getting ready to fight with Japan, but American public did not know that. America was waiting for Japan to start the war before they declared war against Japan. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor they said Japan started the war without declaring it, so they declared war against Japan. Even the man from whom I bought

the land told me that Japan made a mistake by starting the war. I could not reason with him as my English was not good enough.

After the war broke out the F.B.I. started watching Japanese. I heard that in Mayall temporarily hired agents pretending they were searching took valuable items such as watches and jewelry. Mr. Iwasa of Mayall was ill in bed, but F.B.I. agents pulled him down from the bed and beat him up. If I remember correctly he hang himself in his pain. His funeral was held right before the evacuation. Some people had their sashimi knives taken away as F.B.I. claimed they were weapons and some people were arrested for having them. Mrs. Sakuma had been in bed with illness for over 10 years. I heard that F.B.I. took her wedding ring and a gold watch. In Florin people were scared that F.B.I. would come but luckily they didn't as they had already investigated us. Around here only the influential people were arrested but in Delano all the men except 2 were arrested because they donated^{money} to the Heimusha Kai. There were all kinds of rumors.

Q: Were you afraid you might be killed?

A: No, I didn't have that kind of worry.

Q: Did you think you would be interned?

A: I was afraid I might be as my name was on the blacklist because I was connected with the Heimusha Kai. At that time my wife was pregnant with our second daughter so I was worried.

Q: Did you already had one child?

A: We already had 3 and she was the 4th child.

Q: How old was your oldest child then?

A: He had started going to grammar school.

Q: What did you do with your belongings when you evacuated?

A: We packed and took whatever we could with us. We put farm equipments and things we could not take to the yard and barn of our landlord. I went to Elk Grove one day to register and I was told to evacuate the next morning. It was afternoon when I came home. While it was light we carried farm equipments and other things to the landlord's, and at night we cleared the house. We had to separate the things we take and things we leave and pack them. We had to clear 4 rooms but I didn't know where to start. My wife's cousin who was from Hawaii told me that we should do one room at a time. We packed things we take in suitcases and asked the landlord to store the rest of the things in his barn. When we came home almost everything was there except one new bed which was missing. Some people had lots of things stolen but our landlord kept them for us.

Q: Where did you go then?

A: Early next morning the landlord put us and all the neighbors in his truck and took us to Elk Grove, and from there we went to the County Fairground in Fresno. From Fresno we went to Jerome, Arkansas.

Q: How long did you stay in Fresno?

A: We went there in April and left there in September for Arkansas. The train took Northern route through Sacramento, Utah and Wyoming so it took one week. Once in a while the train stopped and let us off. The train stopped at Laramie, Wyoming and let us off. In Salt Lake City the train stopped for a long time while they changed the

dining cars, but did not let us off. We left Fresno after we ate breakfast, but we did not get lunch or supper. The train was run by Santa Fe Railroad, and from there it was run by a Western railroad. At Stockton the train stopped for over half a day while they connected the diner that came from San Francisco. After the train left Stockton we were given supper and breakfast along the Feather River. People with small children could stay in pullman, so my wife and children did, but I stayed in another car. Three or four people had to squeeze in one eat.

Q: Didn't children get hungry and cry?

A: Yes, they said they were hungry. When we left Fresno we bought some cookies and other snack but we ate them up while we were in Stockton. At Salt Lake City, too, the train stopped over half a day and they did not give us one meal. By then we had used up all the food, so we shared whatever was left with the people on the same coach. Usually the people who were in the same block in Fresno were on the same coach so we shared the food like one family.

Q: How was the assembly center in Fresno? Was it inconvenient?

A: It was not like living in our own home as there was public lavatory and public shower.

Q: What kind of difficulties did you have?

A: We had to eat with others at meal time, so we did not have freedom.

Q: How were the housing?

A: They were barracks with black paper on the wall and the ceiling. We were there during the summer, so it was very hot.

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Q: How did you feel when you entered Fresno Assembly Center?

A: I felt as if I were put in a jail. The camp was surrounded by a fence. There were watch towers here and there with sentinels watching. Outside the fence soldiers patrolled and we were told not to go near the fence. At that time Japanese in Fresno had not evacuated yet. Some Japanese near the camp were growing melons, and Indian pickers used to throw some cantaloupe across the street, but later soldiers made them stop doing that. That ranch belonged to an American company and the foreman was a Japanese. Later Japanese in Fresno were put in camps, too.

Q: How was the mealtime?

A: In those days Japanese were not used to community life. It was pitiful because we had to line up for food. We were given only one serving, so young men were not filled. They ate in a hurry and went to another mess hall, stood in a line and ate. I heard that some young men ate in 3 mess halls. Around that time there were bad white people in the kitchen. They took out Bologna and other meat from the kitchen and sold them outside and made much money as meat was rationed.

Q: What else do you remember about Fresno Assembly Center?

Did you work?

A: I distributed coal to kitchens.

Q: Was there any incident in Fresno Assembly Center?

A: I don't remember any in Fresno.

Q: Were there anybody who quarrelled?

A: Mo, not in Fresno. Fresno was quite peaceful. I heard that in Santa Anita a group of young men became unruly. When we went to Jerome people from Santa Anita were there, too. People from Fresno were afraid of them at first, but after we get to know them we found out that Japanese were Japanese. There were all kinds of rumors. After we voted for loyalty, people were divided into loyal group and dis-loyal group.

Q: How did you think about the loyalty?

A: I thought they asked strange questions. To the question, "Do you pledge loyalty to America?" I answered that if I was given American citizenship I will pledge loyalty to America. I did not answer 'no' as I live in America, but I could not betray Japan when I do not have American citizenship. I heard that American government later admitted that it was a mistake to have asked such questions.

Q: What did you think about Nisei going to war?

A: I did not feel too good about them going to fight against their parents' country. Yet I did not tell them not to go. They were born in America ^{and} they are American citizens so they should do whatever they decided to do. Many Niseis believed what they read in American newspapers and said Japan was wrong for attacking Pearl Harbor. Nisei who did not pledge loyalty to America were sent to Tule Lake. In the camp we called them "Washoi gumi" as they used to run around the block shouting, "Washoi! Washoi!"

Q: Did those people ever beat up others?

A: Nothing that violent happened in Jerome. I heard that there were such incidents in Tule Lake. Mr. Hitimi's brother was killed there. There were all kinds of wild rumors going around. In Jerome old men gathered in the boiler room and talked about unfounded news of Japan's victory.

Q: What kind of work did you do in Jerome?

A: I worked in the kitchen. At first I worked as one of the clean-up crew of mess halls and kitchen. There were 5 of us. In Jerome we used wood as fuel in stoves. Since those who were assigned to chop wood could not chop all the wood for the camp, each block sent volunteers to chop wood. As the clean-up crew were all strong men we were told to chop wood, so we chopped wood everyday. When Jerome was closed there were 2 big piles of chopped wood left. In wintertime it was a hard job to get the trees out of the swamp-like place. We hitched wagon on horses and pulled them out.

Q: Were they dead trees?

A: No, we cut down living trees. Sometimes we cut down huge oak trees. They would have made good lumber, but we used them as firewood. The life in camp was not good for the education of children. They played where the parents could not watch, so we did not know what they were doing. Parents who had growing children had worries especially mothers worried a lot about their children. Our children were of playful age, but we did not know what we were doing. We stayed in Jerome the longest. We lived in Gita almost 2 years.

Q: Did you leave Jerome?

A: Jerome was the best camp but it was closed first. The head of Camp Jerome was a good man. We usually could not sell the vegetables we grew in the camp, but in Jerome we grew good turnip, so women washed and bundled them into bunches and sold them. With that money we bought chicken, so we had chicken about twice a week; once as fried chicken and another time as stew. As Jerome was close to Gulf of Mexico we were fed shrimp and oysters. I don't think people outside ate as good as we did. People in the camp were so spoilt that they did not eat beans or spaghetti. I cooked spaghetti like udon, and people ate it for a while.

After we moved to Gila we had chicken may be once while we were there. People in Gila Camp were surprised to hear that we ate shrimps and oysters in Jerome. Only rice was good. It was Texas rice.

Q: What was your hobby?

A: I did not have any hobby. My neighbor invited me to go and learn Shigin but I refused as I could not sing.

Q: Didn't you do anything besides work in the camp?

A: In Arkansas we went in the wood to cut knobs of trees, and after peeling the bark off we made all kinds of things. I went to the wood with a saw and an ax to cut the knobs of trees, but as I did not know what kind of knobs to pick I used to come back with an empty bag when others went back with sack full of knobs. I enjoyed the walking in the wood very much.

Q: Weren't there many snakes in Arkansas?

A: Yes, there were 3 or 4 kinds of poisonous snakes. They were Water Moccasin, Rattle snakes and another kind. There was a small snake about $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet long and very poisonous. If you were bitten by one of them it was fatal. Some young Japanese who were sent to the camp from Hawaii used to catch rattlers which were about 4 feet long and about 5 inches in diameter. They had 17 or 18 bells. These young men used to get up early in the morning to catch them.

Q: What did they do with the snakes?

A: They put snakes in boxes with a wire net and kept them in their rooms.

Q: What did they feed the snakes with?

A: I didn't ask what they feed the snakes with. The people in that block felt uneasy. In the next block a Hawaiian caught a rattler, pulled its fang and used to play with it, but by and by the fang grew back and bit him and the man was taken to the hospital.

Q: Does the fang grow back in after it is pulled?

A: It seems that way.

Q: Aren't there snakes in Okinawa, also?

A: There are habu in Okinawa. Its poison is the worst. If you are bitten by it the part which was bitten becomes deformed even if you escape death.

Q: Were there anybody in the camp who ate snakes?

A: I didn't hear such thing. They make medicine out of snakes, I caught one rattler in Gila. When I went to a canal to see if there

are any turtles I saw a rattler. I threw rocks at it and killed it. I peeled its skin and hang it up to dry. I also ate a little ^{piece} but it did not taste good.

Q: How long did you stay at Jerome?

A: I think we stayed there about 2 years.

Q: Did you go to Gila after Jerome closed?

A: Yes. We stayed at Gila for about 1½ year.

Q: Did you work in Gila?

A: I worked as a carpenter there. The work was mostly repaire work. Gila was a hot place.

Q: Was Jerome a hot place, too?

A: Yes, it was hot and humid there. In Jerome it was so hot that the sweat ran down the shirt I was wearing. It was hot in Gila, too, but the perspiration evaporated, so it felt better.

Q: Was Camp Jerome in the forrest?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: Did it rain much there?

A: Yes, it did. The weather was kind of dull and unsettled. Sometimes there were sudden showers. Even people become dull in that kind of climate. When we went to Jerome they were still building the barracks, Many people who were building the barracks were illiterate and could not write letters or send money to their homes, so they asked young Japanese men to send their pay checks to their homes.

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It was hot and humid and sticky in Jerome all the time. I sweated so much that when I came out from the mess hall after dinner I was drenched with sweat. People used to laugh at me saying, "Did you fall in a ditch?" Before we moved to Gila it was very hot. I cannot forget how hot it was. Winter came early compared to California. Around October it started to get cold.

Q: Was Gila better?

A: It was not too bad as we were used to the life in camp by the time we went there. There was a beautiful auditorium in Gila. Before they hardly used it the war ended, so I think they tore it down.

Q: Was there any trouble in Gila?

A: No, nothing special happened. Before we went there the radicals were sent to Tule Lake, so there was no trouble. Some people say that life in camp was good, but parents with small children felt uncomfortable.

Q: Did you feel some constraint?

A: We were afraid of giving trouble to others. Women with many children lost weight with worries. Older men enjoyed getting together and talking. In Jerome there was a regulation that a boy who did something wrong would have his hair close-cropped. Some policemen in the camp caught some boys who did not do anything bad and cropped their hair. They had the same regulation in Gila. There was no jail, so those who did something wrong had their hair cropped or put to work like digging ditches after school. There were many bad boys but parents did not know what they were doing.

Q: When did you leave Gila?

A: In the last part of September, 1945.

Q: Where did you hear that Japan lost the war?

A: In Gila.

Q: How did people react?

A: We were very disappointed. There were many people from Okinawa on Saipan. When I heard that Japan was defeated on Saipan I thought Japan was going to lose the war.

Q: Were there people who did not believe that Japan lost the war?

A: There were many who did not believe the news.

Q: How did you find about about Japan lost the war?

A: Two Japanese newspapers published in Denver were in the camp, so I subscribed to one of them. A man who used to work for a Japanese newspaper was selling newspaper in the camp. When he left the camp he went around the houses which subscribed for his paper and thanked them for buying his paper.

Q: Did you come straight back here from the camp?

A: Yes, we did. There was a bus that took Japanese from the camp to Los Angeles. From there we took a regular bus to Sacramento. We waited for the bus all day in the bus depot in Los Angeles. When the bus came soldiers and Japanese who came from the camp could get on the bus before other passengers.

Q: What did you do with your luggages?

A: We packed our belongings before we left the camp, and they were delivered to our house free of charge. We brought model cars and everything we made in the camp. Since I had time in the camp, and as I was a carpenter I made wagons out of scrap pieces of wood.

Q: Did you come back to this house?

A: No. Mr. Dakusaku left the camp early and went to Denver. Then he came back here. He wrote me and told me to come back but I was going to stay in the camp as long as we could as I thought it was hard to feed my big family. But when I heard that Mr. Dakusaku's daughter who was in the WAC (Women's Army Corp) died, I decided to come back. However, the funeral was over by the time we came home. At the time we left the camp everybody was getting out. They had so much meat left over that they fed us steak everyday and we got tired of meat.

Q: When you came back here did any white people say anything bad to you?

A: No, but at school one of my children was called a 'Jap'. Those who went to school with my children before were glad to see them. While Japanese were in camp many Oklahomans came here. Since Japanese were back they thought they had to leave, so they said, "Japs get out!" One of my children was kicked by them once at school. After a while the white children who had been here before took side with Japanese children, so the Oklahomans quit giving Japanese children hard time.

Q: Did you own the land?

A: I returned it when I evacuated. I didn't have a house to come back so we went to Mr. Dakusaku's. We fixed his barn and lived there.

I grew strawberry in Mr. Dakusaku's ranch and stayed there for about 9 years. I was afraid we would give Mr. Dakusaku trouble as I had children, so I decided to buy land and have my own house. Mr. Okitsu helped me buy 40 acres of Mr. Bill Gunther's land for \$200 an acre.

Q: Have you been growing strawberry since?

A: Yes.

Q: How many acres of strawberry did you grow?

A: I have cultivated only 10 acres, and the rest has not been touched.

I have only hay growing there, so it is not enough to pay the tax.

Q: Was it hard to start all over again after you came back?

A: Yes, it was. We were poor before we went to camp. In the camp we were paid \$16 a month, so it was not enough even for spending money. When we came back here we had nothing so I had to work hard. Unfortunately I hurt my back when I left Gila and it hurt very much on the bus. I rested only a day or two before I started picking grape.

Q: Wasn't it hard to start all over again?

A: Yes, it was. After I bought the land I had to build a house and install a pump, so I needed much money. I borrowed money from my friends but I paid them back in 9 years.

Q: What year did you buy the land?

A: I bought the land in October 1954 and came here in 1955. I had 10 acres levelled for \$615.

Q: Did you ^{just} grow_A strawberry from the beginning?

A: Yes, just strawberry. At first I grew 3 acres of pickle cucumbers in the strawberry patch. They were much trouble but was not too profitable. It paid utility bills.

Q: Isn't strawberry growing quite a hard work?

A: Yes, it is because we have to work crouching. .

Q: Are you retired now?

A: I am working^{just}_A enough for my health. I am working less and less every year.

Q: Don't your sons help?

A: No, they don't. They think it is foolish to work hard and do not make money. Especially farmers' sons see their parents work hard and do not make money so they do not farm.

Q: About how many years did you work hard before things started going well?

A: It took over 10 years before we were better off. When the children were in school they helped me so I could make it. I couldn't have made it all by myself.

Q: Did the whole family work?

A: At harvest season I hired people. At first I was growing strawberry extensively so I hired 12 to 13 people at harvest time. Some years I could not find helpers so I had to hire children. Since then I decided not to grow straw~~berry~~ extensively and gradually decreased

the growing area. In early days Filipinos used to come and picked strawberry, but now they are old and there are no Filipinos now who pick strawberry. There is no use growing strawberry in large scale if there are no pickers. Strawberry is one fruit that cannot be picked by machine. We can only grow enough strawberry that a family members can pick.

Q: How many children do you have?

A: We have 6.

Q: When did your youngest child graduate from school?

A: One is still attending City College, and two are working.

Q: How many boys?

A: Four boys. Girls got married after graduating from high school.

Two boys are of marrying age but they are working as a carefree singles. Two children were born after we came back from the camp.